



## *School-to-Work Transition in Washington State*

---

### ***What is School-to-Work Transition?***

School-to-Work Transition is a systematic approach to education to equip students with the skills they need to fulfill their potential. It links students, schools, and work places and prepares young people for continued education and the career of their choice.

Locally driven and community based, School-to-Work Transition initiatives combine with ongoing education reform to establish high standards for students and to connect a student's education more closely to his or her interests.

### ***What are the elements of the School-to-Work Transition?***

School-to-Work Transition is based on the premise that most individuals learn best by doing and by relating what they learn in school to real-world experiences.

Each School-to-Work Transition initiative typically will have three elements. **School-based learning** is classroom instruction that integrates high academic standards with vocational learning. **Work-based learning** is experience at job sites that allows students to develop skills and study complex subject matter in a hands-on, work-based environment. **Connecting activities** provide program coordination and support for students, schools, and employers in areas such as career counseling, postsecondary education, and job placements.

School-to-Work Transition envisions a system of well-marked, flexible pathways that *all* students follow as they move from school to college and to eventual employment. A pathway is a cluster of classes within a broad subject area (such as arts and communications, health, or science and technology) that equips a student for an eventual career within that subject area. Pathways make learning relevant by allowing students to practice what they are learning in the classroom in real-world settings and by infusing career-related information into academic studies. Most schools use five to seven pathways, and students choose a pathway based on their individual interest. Students may change pathways should their interests change.

### ***How is School-to-Work Transition being implemented in Washington State?***

Washington State has made improving the education of its youth a top priority in the 1990s. The School-to-Work Transition initiative builds upon the state's current education reform efforts. Recent state laws establish goals for improving student achievement, laying the groundwork for creating a performance-based education system in the public schools, and expanding School-to-Work Transition initiatives statewide.

The Education Reform Act of 1993 (ESHB 1209) established four goals for improving student achievement. The fourth goal calls for students to "*Understand the importance of work and how performance, effort, and decisions directly affect future career and educational opportunities.*" Other legislation provided seed money for a limited number of school districts to develop model School-to-Work Transition initiatives.

In 1994, a council appointed by then-Governor Lowry made recommendations about what the state's School-to-Work Transition initiative should look like. The recommendations encouraged schools, parents, employers, workers, and community leaders to work together to develop an education system that best meets the needs of their youth.

Nationally, the School-to-Work Opportunities Act of 1994 provides venture capital for states to develop a School-to-Work Transition system. In 1995, Washington State was awarded a five-year, \$27 million federal grant to enable local communities to create School-to-Work Transition initiatives and for state-level partners to assist with system-building activities.

**Establishing a School-to-Work Transition initiative primarily is the responsibility of the local community.** About 200 of the state's 296 school districts have established partnerships or started School-to-Work Transition initiatives. During the 1996–97 school year, these districts received more than \$5 million in state and federal funds to help them get started. This year districts will receive \$3.2 million. The goal is to have initiatives in place in all schools statewide by the year 2000.

### ***The public supports School-to-Work Transition.***

A recent survey of adults in Washington State found widespread support for students to receive career preparation in school and for School-to-Work Transition to be part of local school curriculum.

In the survey, 74 percent said careers and the skills necessary to succeed at work should be introduced to students before high school, and 87 percent said high schools should provide career preparation to every student before they graduate. Nearly everyone, 96 percent, said an education system that includes School-to-Work Transition is “highly desirable” or “desirable.” School-to-Work Transition was described as providing a strong academic foundation for every student, giving every student hands-on learning experience, and providing an opportunity for every student to practice what they have learned in a work-based setting.

Also, a 1996 summer survey of youths in Seattle also showed widespread support among students of all grade levels for job-related experience connected to their education and for School-to-Work Transition.

### ***Who is involved in School-to-Work Transition?***

The **Governor's School-to-Work Task Force** directs the activities of the state's public and private partners to ensure they support local initiatives and connect local partnerships and initiatives into a statewide system.

Its members are **Mic Dinsmore**, Executive Director, Port of Seattle, Chair of the Task Force; **Rick Bender**, President, Washington State Labor Council, AFL-CIO; **Dr. Terry Bergeson**, Superintendent of Public Instruction; **Don Brunell**, President, Association of Washington Business; **Chuck Collins**, Chair, Commission on Student Learning; **Earl Hale**, Executive Director, State Board for Community and Technical Colleges; **Betty Jane Narver**, Chair, Workforce Training and Education Coordinating Board; **Dick Spangler**, Education Affairs Manager, The Boeing Company; and **Dick Thompson**, Director, Office of Financial Management.

Five state-level organizations are supporting local School-to-Work Transition initiatives. They are the:

**Association of Washington Business** and **Washington State Labor Council**, which formed an alliance to expand business and labor involvement in local School-to-Work Transition initiatives. *Contact Carol Monohon, AWB, (360) 943-1600, and Randy Loomans, WSLC, (360) 943-0608.*

**State Board for Community and Technical Colleges**, which is developing industry-based skills standards, preparing faculty and staff for work-based learning, and developing training for teachers, staff, and work site supervisors. *Contact Dan McConnon, (360) 753-0878.*

**Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction**, which is awarding grants to local School-to-Work Transition partnerships, assisting in teacher training and development of career pathways and curriculum, and ensuring that School-to-Work Transition initiatives meet the needs of all students. *Contact Bill Crossman, (360) 753-2060.*

**Workforce Training and Education Coordinating Board**, which is resolving barriers to expanding student work-based learning opportunities, assisting in development of a regional structure for connecting activities, designing an accountability system, and coordinating public awareness activities. *Contact Kyra Kester, (360) 586-8678.*

---